

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 161 812

SO 011 289

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TITLE Undergraduate Internships for Social Science Majors: Development and Longitudinal Evaluation of a Model Program.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 13p.; Document not available in hard copy from EDRS due to poor reproducibility of original document; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Washington, D.C., March, 1978)
AVAILABLE FROM Dr. Michael Rosmann, Department of Psychology, Gilmer Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901 (free)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Community Attitudes; Community Services; Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Internship Programs; Program Descriptions; *Program Evaluation; *Psychology; Relevance (Education); School Community Programs; *Social Sciences; *Sociology; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This program report traces the development of the University of Virginia's undergraduate internship program. The original internship program was established in 1973 to provide social science majors, chiefly psychology majors, with opportunities to apply academically derived knowledge and skills in community service areas. Funded by a federal ACTION grant, the program placed 85 students for 12-month tenures at 28 community agencies over a three-year interval. Upon termination of federal funding in 1976, a state-funded program was initiated to coordinate internships for approximately 30 psychology and 20 sociology majors annually at 29 community agencies. The second program was designed to correct several shortcomings revealed from an evaluation of its predecessor. The results of two separate evaluations--one of the first federally-funded internship program and one of the current state-funded program--are presented in this report. The evaluation of the current program shows that many positive results of the first internship program are still being experienced. Interns rate themselves as significantly more fulfilled, active, worthwhile, and possessing a more broadened outlook on life than students who have not participated in the program. The interns are more sure of their career choices. In addition, the interns' grade point averages improved more during their internship year than did those of other psychology and sociology majors. (RM)

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Undergraduate Internships for Social Science Majors:
Development and Longitudinal Evaluation of a Model
Program¹

By Michael R. Rosmann²

¹Paper presented at the meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., March, 1978. This project was supported by funds from ACTION and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The author expresses appreciation to Mr. R. Glenn Mowbray and Mr. Fred Garland for their assistance in gathering and analyzing portions of the data reported in this paper.

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OC-011289

OCT 13 1978

Undergraduate Internships for Social Science Majors: Development
and Longitudinal Evaluation of a Model Program¹

Michael R. Rosmann²

In 1973 an internship program was set up for undergraduates in the social sciences, chiefly psychology majors, at the University of Virginia. This program, funded by a federal ACTION grant, placed a total of 85 students for 12 month tenures at 28 community agencies during a three-year interval. Upon termination of federal funding in the summer of 1976, a state funded program was initiated to coordinate internships for approximately 30 psychology and 20 sociology majors annually at 30 community agencies. The current internship program, officially called the Undergraduate Internship Program (UIP), was designed to correct for several shortcomings revealed from an evaluation of its predecessor. This program report traces the development of the UIP, including the process of winning University and state support.

The original internship program was designed to provide social science majors with opportunities to apply academically derived knowledge and skills in service areas such as community mental health, juvenile and adult justice, day care, legal aid, and physical health. The students worked 20 to 30 hours per week at their placement agencies and received subsistence salaries from the ACTION grant and a small match from their agencies. In turn, the interns were required to work exclusively with poverty issues and the poor. According to the ACTION guidelines, the interns were not supposed to attend formal classes and were to receive academic credit only for their placement work. However, this guideline had to be relaxed because there was no structure in the University to allow students to receive academic credit for only informal work. Therefore, the interns attended classes in areas related to their work and received credit for these courses and independent study projects associated with their work at their placements.

With termination of federal funding in sight, the ACTION funded program was evaluated in the Spring of 1976 and the results of the evaluation were used to shape the present UIP program. A "posttest only, control group design" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) was used to assess differences between the 85

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interns who participated up to that time and a control group which matched the interns in terms of age, race, sex, and major course of study. In addition, subjective and objective evaluatory data were obtained from supervisors at the agencies where the interns were placed and from faculty who had advised the interns and graded their work. Evaluation questionnaires were devised and mailed to the interns, control group subjects, agency supervisors, and faculty advisors. The return rates were as follows: interns-57%, control group-68%, agency supervisors-67%, and faculty advisors-55%. The interns and control subjects who returned questionnaires were compared on the matched dimensions and found to be nearly similar in terms of age, race, sex, and major course of study. Ten respondents from each of the four groups were randomly selected and interviewed in the seventh and eighth weeks after the questionnaires were mailed in order to check on the reliability of the questionnaire data. The questionnaires and interview responses to four questions were compared and found to yield nearly equivalent results, thus affording high confidence in the reliability of the questionnaire data for all respondents.

For the most part, the questionnaire results availed themselves to t test analyses when two groups were compared and to one-way ANOVAs when more than two groups were compared on the same ordinal or interval scale measurements. Responses to open ended questions were subjected to content analyses. Using this method (Smith, Rice, Rosmann & White, 1974), two independent judges read all responses to the same question and derived two sets of response categories. The two sets of response categories were collapsed when they overlapped and a third independent judge then forced each open ended response into one or more of the previously generated categories. This procedure allowed for frequency comparisons between groups for various categories checked.

The questionnaire results for the interns and control group subjects were compared first. Table 1 shows average ratings on seven point scales which were designed to assess the respondents' feelings about their total experiences at the University of Virginia. As can be seen, the interns rated themselves as significantly more fulfilled, active, good, worthwhile, and possessing a more broadened outlook on life than their matched counterparts. When asked about the ways in which they were most pleased with their total experiences at the University, the interns cited their internships and self growth as the best aspects. Control subjects, on the other hand, cited academic experiences as the best aspects. The control subjects reported dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities for practical experiences as their major dissatisfaction with their University educations. Over half of the control group respondents indicated that they

would participate in undergraduate internships if given the opportunity. Finally, the interns were more sure of their career choices and felt a greater sense of social consciousness than the control subjects, when asked about these matters on open ended questions.

The agency supervisors who responded to the questionnaire reported that the presence of interns in the agencies saved \$136,032 in salaries and that the interns were directly responsible for obtaining \$48,760 in grants. Probably these figures would be higher if all agency supervisors had responded on questionnaires. Over the three year interval these agency supervisors estimated that the interns served 4,358 different clients and many of these clients were served multiple times. Eighty-four percent of the agency supervisors felt that the interns allowed the agencies to serve their clients better and the supervisors cited many examples of these services. For example, two interns developed an emergency foster care program for children; two other interns initiated a school program for adult jail prisoners who had not attained high school diplomas.

Table 2 presents several of the questionnaire results and comparisons of these results for interns, agency supervisors, and faculty advisors. The faculty advisors indicated that the interns should spend a lower number of hours per week (12.8) at their placements than the interns (21.2) or agency supervisors (19.9) felt they should. Generally, the faculty advisors rated the benefits of internships to interns, agencies, faculty, clients, and the University lower than the interns and agency supervisors and the faculty were least favorable about permanent institutionalization of the program in the University. These results should be understood in light of the fact that the faculty felt they benefitted least from the internship program.

Analyses of responses by interns, agency supervisors and faculty advisors to open-ended questions aided in the interpretation and elaboration of the results shown in Table 2. All three groups lauded the internship program for its benefits to interns in terms of personal growth, increased social consciousness, and solidification of career choices. The faculty advisors felt that participation in internships would aid the interns in obtaining acceptance into graduate training. All three groups also perceived advantages of the program to agencies and clients, chiefly in the ability of the agencies to serve more clients and serve them better. The agency supervisor indicated their pleasure in University involvement in community affairs through intern placements and felt that the program improved general feeling within the community toward the University. However, there was general consensus among all three groups of respondents that the faculty advisors had too little

contact with the interns and the sponsoring agencies. Reasons cited by the faculty for their deficient involvement in the internship program included the observations that the faculty advisors received no monetary reimbursement or other credit for supervising students' work and reviewing written reports and that many interns did not take it upon themselves to seek out faculty members' advice. Some faculty indicated that the time spent advising interns took away from time needed for research and other activities more commensurate with winning tenure and promotion. Still other faculty felt that students should not receive academic credit for extra-classroom activities. In view of these revealed negative feelings among some faculty, it is understandable that faculty advisors' ratings of the internship program are lower than those of the interns and agency supervisors. In short, the faculty had the least to gain from the program.

The program evaluation results revealed several additional shortcomings with the original internship program. Many interns felt somewhat isolated from aspects of University social life because of their intense involvements with their agency work. Some interns complained of difficulty in obtaining independent study credit for their agency projects. Both the interns and the agency supervisors felt a need for better integration of academic coursework with on-the-job activities and problems. Finally, two agency supervisors suggested upgrading the standards for screening the prospective interns and matching the interns better with agency placements.

Late in the Spring of 1976 a modified internship program (UIP) was proposed which retained most of the positive features and attempted to correct for the shortcomings of its predecessor. Pat Woodson, the director of the earlier program, and I sought support from University administrative officials for a state-funded program which would be permanently institutionalized within the University of Virginia. University officials approved the UIP for two years, and it has subsequently been extended this Spring for two more years. It appears that a biennial pattern of program proposal and continuation has been established.

While the goals of the current program have remained similar to those of its predecessor, the range of placement activities was expanded to meet a greater diversity of needs among undergraduates. In order to correct for problems of overinvolvement of interns in placement activities and alienation from University life, participation was limited to ten hours per week in most instances, although a few interns were allowed by their choice to work twenty hours per week. A standard screening procedure was set up whereby only psychology and sociology students could apply for internships. Enrollment was limited to psychology and sociology majors because only the Psychology and Sociology departments offered support to the UIP proposal and these academic

majors seemed most suited to internship experiences. (A possibility exists for internships in other undergraduate majors in the future.) Over 150 students applied for internships during the summer preceding the first year of the UIP and this unexpectedly large pool of applicants forced the limitation of internships to seniors only. The applicants were matched tentatively to agency placements by taking several criteria into account, namely: stated interests of the applicant, courses completed which related to placement activities, career aspirations, and previous experience. (See Appendix A for application form.) Agency personnel interviewed the top several prospects and were allowed to veto these tentative matches. To this date, only four tentative matches were turned down by the agency supervisors. During the past two years, 80 percent of the applicants were successfully placed; the remaining applicants were rejected for any of several reasons: too low grade point average, unusual internship aspirations for which no setting existed, or lack of academic preparation.

In order to alleviate the concerns of the faculty about the predeceasing program, two faculty members were designated as official UIP directors (one in psychology and one in sociology) and received partial teaching credit for their responsibilities. Funds were provided to the Psychology and Sociology departments to replace the two professors in one of their regularly scheduled courses and to hire teaching assistants for each director. A coordinator was hired to arrange placement contracts with agencies and to coordinate intern screening and evaluation. Official internship courses were added to the course offerings in psychology and sociology, thus eliminating difficulties in obtaining course credit by the interns. In order to facilitate integration of academic coursework with on-the-job issues and concerns, the interns regularly completed written critical incident reports, reading reviews, activity evaluations, and participated in biweekly seminars with one of the UIP directors. The interns also received at least one hour of supervision per week from their respective agency supervisors.

A second evaluation, which utilized information from interns and agency supervisors, was undertaken in the Spring of 1977. This evaluation showed that the benefits revealed in the first evaluation were still being experienced. In addition, there were no perceived shortcomings of the new program. The interns' grade point averages prior to and following their participation in the UIP were compared to the grade point averages of other psychology and sociology seniors. Even with internship grades stricken, the interns' grade point averages improved more (i.e., .40 vs. .16) during their internship year than the remaining psychology and sociology majors.

A major implication of this report is that undergraduate internships are likely to be valuable heuristic experiences

for undergraduate students in the social sciences who do not currently have such opportunities. This program's experiences would be helpful to other colleges and universities.

References

Campbell, D.T. & Stanley, J. C. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963.

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Table 1

Rating Scale Results for Interns and Control Group Subjects

Item	Interns	Controls
When I reflect on my "total experience" (curricular as well as extracurricular, social and person experiences) here at the University I feel:		
1 = unfulfilled, 7 = fulfilled	5.38	4.84*
1 = unsatisfied, 7 = satisfied	5.25	4.79
1 = passive, 7 = active	5.68	4.76**
1 = overspecialized, 7 = well rounded	5.21	5.04
1 = bad, 7 = good	5.55	5.05*
1 = I have a narrow outlook on life, 7 = broadened outlook on life	6.06	5.59*
1 = my total experience was not worthwhile, 7 = total experience was worthwhile	6.02	5.45*
1 = I am not a good problem solver, 7 = I am a good problem solver	5.98	5.20
1 = I like myself, 7 = I do not like myself	5.79	5.81
1 = I have not grown, 7 = I have grown	6.54	6.18

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: On half of the items 1 equals the negative pole and 7 equals the positive pole and on the other items the poles were reversed. For the sake of clear reporting, however, all ratings are reported with the negative pole equal to 1 and the positive pole equal to 7.

Table 2

Results for Interns, Agency Supervisors, and Faculty Advisors

Item	Interns	Agency Super- visors	Faculty Advisors
What is the ideal number of hours per week for an intern to spend at his/her placement?	21.2	19.9	12.8**
Ratings of utility of internship program, on 7 point scales:			
to interns	6.46	6.27	5.50*
to agencies	6.04	5.84	4.73*
to faculty	4.26	3.60	3.58
to agency clients	5.56	5.47	4.45**
to University in general	5.15	5.17	4.74
Should internship program be institutionalized?			
1 = definitely not, 7 = definitely yes	6.17	6.47	5.45

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Note: On half of the rating scale items 1 equals the negative pole and 7 equals the positive pole and on the other items the poles were reversed. For the sake of clear reporting, however, all ratings are reported with the negative pole equal to 1 and the positive pole equal to 7.

Appendix A

UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
 551 Cabell Hall
 Department of Sociology
 University of Virginia
 Charlottesville, VA 22903
 804/924-7293

APPLICATION FOR 1978-79*

I. Name _____
 Current School Address _____
 _____ Current Phone _____
 Summer Address _____
 _____ Summer Phone _____
 Date of Birth _____ Social Security # _____
 Date of Graduation ____ Dec '78 ____ May '79 ____ Aug '79 ____ Dec '79

II. Major(s) _____ Overall GPA _____ Major GPA _____
 When did you declare your major(s) (semester and year)? _____

Coursework completed or currently being taken in major field
 (by title):

How many more credit hours will you need to complete your major
 after the Spring '78 semester? _____

Coursework completed or currently being taken in related fields
 or in areas that you think may be helpful to you in a UIP
 placement (by title):

* Constructed by Pat Woodson

- III. Your previous work experience including paid employment, volunteer work, EXTERN, etc.

Name of Org./Ind.
and Location

Dates

Brief description of work

- IV. Your special interests and talents (sports, crafts, art, music, hobbies, etc.):

- V. Do you have a valid driver's license? _____ Do you have your own transportation? _____ If so, what? _____ bicycle _____ motorcycle _____ car

- VI. The following are the general areas in which placements are available. Number--according to your order of preference--those in which you are interested (1 being your first preference; 2, your second, etc.).

_____ Adult Education	_____ Elderly	_____ Mental Health and Retardation
_____ Alcoholism Treatment/Rehabilitation	_____ Health Care	_____ Recreation
_____ Criminal Justice	_____ Housing	_____ Social Work
_____ Daycare	_____ Legal Assistance	

If there is an area in which you would like to work which is not listed above, please indicate what it is: _____

VII. Please give a brief statement about your post-graduation plans (i.e., graduate school, travel, etc.). Include a sentence about where you would like to be professionally ten years from now.

VIII. Why are you interested in participating in an internship experience (i.e., what are your personal motivations)?

IX. What do you hope to get out of an internship experience (i.e., what are your personal goals)?

X. Additional comments: